

Lovemoor, Augustus

A

L E T T E R

FROM A

FATHER TO A SON,

ON HIS

MARRIAGE.

L O N D O N:

Printed for EDWARD and CHARLES DILLY,
in the Poultry.

M.DCC.LXXVIII



A
L E T T E R
FROM A
FATHER TO A SON,
ON HIS
M A R R I A G E.

IT is not, I assure you, my dear Charles, without the most sensible mortification, that I find myself obliged to relinquish the hope of being present at the completion of your best wishes: but the entangled state of your uncle's affairs, which would greatly suffer by my absence, will yet detain me in London a considerable time; and I should deem myself

B 2 guilty

4 *A Letter from a Father to a Son,*

guilty of most unpardonable selfishness, were I even to permit the retardment of the happiness of two lovers for the sake of a private gratification. I therefore earnestly desire both you and Miss Melway, not to think of delaying your nuptials on my account.

My sudden and unexpected avocation from Cumberland to London, prevented me, (as I had intended, and as you so earnestly desire in your letter) from opening my sentiments to you, on the conduct advisable to a man, in the state into which you was then purposing to enter.— I had not done this before, because I was desirous to regulate my advice according to what I should find the bent of your disposition to be; whether it would lead you to a more sedate and serious affection, to a more warm and lively, or a more tender and heart-felt passion. Yet I thought I had,
through

through the melancholy leisure of a long widowhood, taken every preparatory measure to ensure your, and consequently your partner's, happiness in that social relation, whatever might be hereafter the particular tendency of your inclinations, by trying to call forth the benevolent, still more than the brilliant qualities of human nature; to which endeavours, I had the delight to find your own amiable disposition so responsive.—The happy connection which the change of our villa procured us with the truly respectable family of lord Melway, verified the opinion I always entertained, that you was capable of that tender and exalted sort of love, the affectation of which is alone ridiculous, as the reality of it is consonant to, and refines our natures, and rather mellows and expands than swallows up our other kindly feelings. It was with great joy I thought I discovered in Miss Melway, a heart in

6 *A Letter from a Father to a Son,*

perfect unison with your's, endued with the same rare, but noble and elevated simplicity, the never-failing indication of a truly great and virtuous mind. Your manner of addressing that beautiful and amiable lady, which was not till after a long and intimate converse with her, and equally devoid of presumption or servile flattery, shewed a soul wholly possessed, and at the same time dignified, by the object of its passion, and the sweet and frank signs of equal and concordant affection, by which she answered those addresses, crowned my presaging hopes of a lasting and delightful connection between you. Having consented with joy to your union as soon as our mutual concerns would allow it; I began to think of performing the duty of a friend and father, by imparting to you some advice on your future conduct to the lovely woman who was going to complete the gift she had made you of
her

her heart, by that of her hand, suited to the refined attachment that subsisted between you; together with some observations on the causes of matrimonial disunion originating in our sex. But whenever I turned my thoughts on this subject, it so awakened the ideas of the few short years of unmixed conjugal felicity I enjoyed with the delightful partner of my heart, your excellent mother, that I apprehended too frequent interruptions from the emotions of my mind for an oral communication of my sentiments on that head, and so I resolved to throw them on paper. Especially as in that shape they would afford you a better opportunity of a future review, should you ever desire it.

Since our separation, which deferred the execution of my design, this is the first interval of leisure that has offered of re-assuming it; and indeed this short essay (if I may so term this effusion of

8 *A Letter from a Father to a Son,*

parental affection) may be the least unseasonable and improper, because among the numerous productions of modern ages, upon almost every subject, I know of none that has had this point in view. Several treatises have indeed been addressed to WOMEN, on their conduct in the wedded state, beside a number of papers in periodical publications. Patience and obedience, the chief points so universally and earnestly inculcated in those pieces, considering they were mostly penned by men, reflect, methinks, no great honor on the temper and generosity of our sex. It would strike you as ludicrous, if I attributed our deficiency of admonition on that head, to our conduct not standing in need of any.—We may find an easier solution.—Marriage is considered as the chief, if not the only end of female life. In men it is hardly esteemed a point of secondary moment. From this position, too generally established,

blished, though true in one sense, some hasty deductions have been drawn: for though partly necessity, and partly custom having thrown almost every employment on men, the advancement and improvement in those employments must necessarily demand their first attention; yet I believe unsophisticated nature will point out the conjugal union as the equal end of human happiness in both sexes; and therefore the too commonly received opinion, that respect, and a sort of attentive compliance to the tastes and inclinations of the person to whose society we are joined for life, together with a gentle forbearance and mild admonition of the faults of that person—which are the very cements of a tender and generous passion—are duties most peculiarly, if not solely, incumbent on the wife, is most dangerously erroneous. This sentiment, necessarily fatal to the tender feelings, that owe their very existence

10 *A Letter from a Father to a Son,*

istence to the reciprocal marks of responsive affections, is attended with aggravated inconveniencies, and productive of more unhappy consequences, in those countries where chivalry has established a flattering mode of courtship to the fair.

Among most other nations, a woman is given by her father to the man whom he has chosen, as only a more precious species of property; and being scarcely ever addressed by the man on whom she is bestowed before he becomes her husband, never considers him but in the light of a master to whom she must submit, and whom it is her interest to please. The husband there enjoys the cold and unsatisfying possession of a slave, whilst the woman vegetates in a state of dull and uncomfortable servitude; but still her insipid tranquillity is not disturbed by the stings of disappointment. Among the politer inhabitants of Europe, women
are

are treated before marriage with the most flattering distinctions; their wishes are considered as so many orders, their displeasure as the greatest calamity, and even their caprices are treated with complaisance by their lovers. A beautiful young woman in the very age for vanity and sanguine expectations, the two grand misleaders of mankind, confident of her own charms, and still more of her lover's virtues, naturally expects a continuance of that obsequious deportment in the husband, that helped to render the lover so amiable and acceptable, and which she is now ready to return; but to her utter surprise and deep mortification, she finds the tables turned, and he, whose conduct was some time ago so attentive and pleasing, now claims that tender complaisance of behaviour from her, which he was wont himself to pay, without almost any return on his side. The new-married lady upon this event,
—her

12 *A Letter from a Father to a Son,*

—her pride mortified, her hopes disappointed, and her tenderness and sensibility hurt to the quick, according to the prevalence of the angry, the soft, or the gay dispositions of her mind—either breaks out into violent resentment, sinks into a state of melancholy chagrin, or tries to dissipate the vexation of her deluded hopes in the folly of fashion, and the empty round of loitering amusements: whilst disdain and anger occupy the mind of the husband, who regrets his misfortune of being united to a woman, whose romantic pride expects the farce of a courtship, which custom obliged him to comply with, to be supported through marriage, instead of fulfilling the duties incumbent on a wife.

You may perceive I have not been talking of those illiberal conjunctions that interest so frequently makes, and which rather deserve the stigma of prostitution, than the honorable appellation of
of

of matrimony ; but of those unions, which owe their origin in virtuous persons to sincere mutual affections, tho' afterwards rendered unhappy by the inveteracy of prejudice, encouraged by pride and selfishness.

Your uncle exhibits a mournful picture of this sort of blasted happiness ; of whose disunion with his amiable lady, I have been, notwithstanding all my endeavours, an helpless confident on both sides, though I have hitherto concealed the uncomfortable knowledge of it from you. What advantage would an happy harmony between them have been to both ! probably it would have prevented their present misfortune, or even if it had not, how would it have alleviated its weight ! Unhappy and foolish man ! blest with an uncommon understanding, and assisted by a liberal education, he nevertheless, with narrow-minded prejudice, considered the other sex as made to allay
the

14 *A Letter from a Father to a Son,*

the passions and sooth the tempers of his own, without being entitled to a return of similar regard. Loved to enthusiasm by a most beautiful and amiable woman, how easily might he have maintained his influence on her heart, by continuing in some degree, in his behaviour towards her, those nameless attentions, the genuine marks of a tender and delicate passion, that had so great a share in gaining her heart, and from which he fondly imagined the nuptial ceremony had released him! and yet he expected of her, all those minute testimonies of attachment, all that insinuating compliance, all that respect, the smallest return of which he deemed it beneath his dignity to make. To defend this, he often reasoned about the superiority of understanding in men, and their more important occupations, which dispensed them from punctilio's; about the universal agreement of mankind in these points.—He
9 thought

thought himself rational, but he was only selfish—He did not consider he was attempting to reconcile contraries—That he wanted to join the delights of a refined passion, and the convenience of a dependent connexion—That he wanted the delicate plant of sentiment, nurtured by the soft zephyr of equal and reciprocal tenderness alone, to endure the inclement blast of surly pre-eminence :—or rather, he wanted his indolence indulged, his pride gratified, and his vanity flattered. Had he not been under the influence of these selfish passions, he would have seen that true love is incompatible with the odious elevation of authority, that it levels all distinctions, and that the king who wished to be sincerely loved by a dairy-maid, must not only forget his crown, and the meanness of her condition ; but must also persuade her to do the same.—The pretended superiority therefore of our sex,

16 *A Letter from a Father to a Son,*

sex, were it even true, must be wholly relinquished by him who wishes to attain the height of conjugal felicity. And I think that an argument of no very inconsiderable weight that there is no such superiority, since it would only be an impediment to the best enjoyment of which human nature is capable, and the most conformable to its dictates.

The change in your uncle's manner, became but too soon apparent to lady Frances, yet she was afraid to seem too full of expectations. She at length however ventured to mention some instances of that alteration which alarmed her tenderness. An insipid yet distasteful joke was all the satisfaction she received. Her love—perhaps too a little, her pride, was hurt.—She expostulated with affectionate warmth.—He answered those expostulations with a provoking coolness, by telling her that they had been these

six months out of the land of romance,—that she was now a wife;—that she could not expect her husband to busy himself with trivial marks of affection,—that he loved her dearly,—and as a friend both to her happiness and his own, would advise her to exchange her romances and novels, for Dean Swift's, and other good advice to married ladies, and to give the marriage service a fresh and more attentive perusal. Confounded and stung to the heart with this indelicate and unexpected reply, she withdrew without uttering a syllable; and immediately assumed a cold, distant, and constrained civility: yet it was constrained; and therefore he might still have remedied all by acknowledging his fault (of which he was in his own heart conscious, and the consequences of which deeply afflicted him, for he really loved his wife) in using ridicule on so improper a juncture. But it

C

was

18 *A Letter from a Father to a Son,*

was not the man's part to sooth—; he might perhaps carry his raillery too far, but did it become her to resent it in such a manner?—To think of forcing her husband, by her affected sternness to make a concession!—Nay—perhaps she expected him to ask her pardon.—What if he had been a little in the wrong, was it not the duty of a wife to have borne that wrong with patience?—had she not promised it?—Had he indeed perceived she were hurt, and yet strove to hide it, that would have touched him.—He was glad however she had been the aggressor, for his innocent jest could not be esteemed a reasonable cause of offence.—Make remonstrances indeed!—he would never be the dupe of a woman's artifice to establish her power.—He was very sorry however this quarrel had happened.—He would not be backward in a reconciliation, provided she made the first advances to-

wards it, who first began the rupture.—One might be happy with these women, if they had not such intolerable pride and vanity.

These were the gradual workings of his mind: whilst, on the other side, the stings of disappointed tenderness working on a mind somewhat tinctured with pride, yet capable of the noblest exertions of love, and that consequently felt the injury done to it in the most lively manner, raised the most painful sentiments in Lady Frances' breast, which, too sharp long to last, subsided by degrees into a state of indifference, verging on disgust.—Indignation had soon the same effect on Mr. Reeveley's mind.

From this disunion arose most of their other misfortunes.—Lady Frances was naturally a woman of high spirit, and of a gay and lively turn. Whilst her anger and sorrow subsisted at their height, she gave herself up to
C 2 melancholy;

20 *A Letter from a Father to a Son,*

melancholy ; in proportion as that decreased, she endeavoured to divert it by company and amusements, till by degrees she grew at length dissipated. Her first passion (which had been blasted by disappointment) was love ; her second, vanity.—That passion, I believe, holds the first place in the greater number of hearts, though there are many in which it stands only second ; but blest are those few with whom it enjoys not even that rank : vanity has then but a very small, I had almost said, a proper share in their composition.

Though married to a person engaged in commerce, yet the extensive nature of it, his descent from an ancient family, her own noble birth, and their opulence, entitled Lady Reeveley to associate with what is called, the best company. Her beauty was celebrated, her manner was elegant and enchanting, her taste was superior to most, her vanity strong ;—
she

she got quite into the *ton*. She was conscious it was not to dance the round of fashionable folly that she had entered into the sacred engagements of marriage; but what could she do? was she not forced to it by the unkind behaviour of a false, ungrateful man? —She could not quite so well excuse her playing high;—but how could it be helped? she avoided cards as much as possible;—but when one is connected with persons of fashion, one must conform a little to them.

She took care however of her daughter's education, and would, by cultivating such connections, be able to introduce her into the world with *eclat*:—for as to her son, she gave him entirely up to his father's management. She was for a private tutor, but his father was determined to send him to Westminster; where, with the help of his example at home he would,

22 *A Letter from a Father to a Son,*

soon learn to despise his mother, and endeavour to tyrannize over his sister.

Mr. Reeveley's propensity to scheming, favoured by the nature of his commercial concerns, was not a little encouraged by his want of social happiness; the surest as well as pleasantest safeguard against that restlessness of mind implanted in us for the most exalted purposes, and which taking a wrong channel, is perhaps, even oftener than avarice, the cause of such hazardous enterprizes.—Pretences are seldom wanting to our desires.—He must needs at whatever risk find some extraordinary resources for her ladyship's loss at cards, which was not however so very considerable. What an outcry would be raised against him in her fashionable *coterie*, what a monster would he be esteemed, if he attempted to restrain her in so necessary an article of expence!

Continual

Continual bickerings between the children (whose behaviour towards each other is generally formed upon that of their parents) were the fatal effects of this disunion.—The boy was favoured by the father, and the girl by the mother. Where a couple love one another, the case I believe is usually different. There, a pleasing recollection of the object beloved, presents itself more lively in a child of the same sex; but in the other case it has quite a contrary effect, unless envy (a sentiment of which Lady Reeveley was incapable) steps in.—The girl urged her birthright, and the complaisance due to her sex, to make her brother yield her the way in what she wanted; whilst he, after scarcely deigning to give some surly hints about the superiority of man, generally prepared to obtain the object of his desire by force. You may wonder how children of seven and eight years of age should contend

about the pre-eminence of the sexes. But we have a great many more words than ideas, not only whilst children, but even when of maturer years. —Whenever Lady Frances and Mr. Reeveley met without company (which was not indeed very frequently) their children were always present; and they usually spent the most considerable portion of that time in talking at, rather than to one another. They took occasion, upon every incident of conjugal disunion among their extensive acquaintance, that so frequently came to their knowledge, of indirectly repeating their sentiments about each other's conduct in that state. This often gave rise to discussions about the duties incumbent on each party in marriage, which at length terminated in sharp and warm disputes concerning the respective merits of the sexes. The children, in their little differences, naturally used the expressions they had heard

heard

heard their parents use, without well understanding them; and those very expressions still further biassed the already warped minds of the parents in the decision of those differences.—Lady Frances was determined her poor girl should not be tyrannized over by a rude boy; and Mr Reeveley would not have his lad fooled by the pertness of miss. This gave rise to fresh contentions; and at length produced as great a disunion between the younger, as the elder part of the family.

Happily their misfortunes have healed those dissensions which originally gave them birth.—Upbraiding and disdainful looks were the first fruits of these calamities. But when Mr. Reeveley found not only his own fortune destroyed, but even his wife's jointure seized by his creditors, occasioned by a flaw owing to him (for Lady Frances had committed entirely
to

26 *A Letter from a Father to a Son,*

to him the care of the settlements) and nothing left of her large fortune but an estate of five hundred a year, her ladyship's pin-money, and at her sole disposal; his dejection of spirits cannot be expressed.

After a solemn, silent dinner some days ago, Mr. Reeveley addressed Lady Frances in the following manner; “ Madam, by a fatal, though I believe you must be convinced, an “ involuntary mistake (for I had no “ possibility of gaining by it) and by “ unfortunate attempts to increase, I “ have ruined your fortune. Deeply “ afflicted and humbled for having “ done you an injury I can never “ compensate, I can only ask a boot- “ less pardon. I have likewise to ac- “ quaint your ladyship, that it is my “ unalterable resolution, as soon as “ my affairs will permit it, to retire “ to the south of France on the “ fifty pounds annuity, that my cre- “ ditors

“ditors cannot deprive me of: be-
“side your forgiveness (which I can
“hardly hope to obtain) let me
“further entreat your ladyship, by
“the generosity you so eminently
“possess, to remember in your con-
“duct to these children, whom I
“must entirely leave to your care,
“that William is your child, as well
“as my son.”

Notwithstanding an assumed firm-
ness of tone, Mr. Reeveley's whole
frame during his pronouncing those
words, bespoke a most violent agita-
tion.—Nothing was better calculated
to work upon Lady Frances's gene-
rosity and remaining sparks of affec-
tion towards her husband, than his pre-
sent humiliation.—“O! Reeveley (said
“she, catching his hand) talk not of
“forgiveness, entertain not the cruel
“thought of leaving us. We have
“no doubt been both in fault; but
“let us turn our misfortunes into fe-
“licity.

28 *A Letter from a Father to a Son,*

“licity, by making it the happy
“means of renewing that union, which
“prosperity perhaps aided to dissolve.”
—Mr. Reeveley could not speak.—
“Come, children” (continued she, and
throwing herself at his feet) “come
“and assist me to dissuade your fa-
“ther from his unnatural purpose.”—
Mr. Reeveley likewise throwing himself
at her feet and catching her in his arms,
could only utter, “O! whom have I
“neglected?”—Tears stopt the rest.
—The children knelt; I knelt; we all
knelt together and wept.—All is happily
concluded.—The creditors will be, I
fancy, almost wholly satisfied by this
unexpected accession of the jointure.
I design my India stock to make up
the deficiency; so that I doubt not
of your uncle’s affairs being at length
agreeably settled.

But O! my Charles, though this
reconciliation is happy, and I hope will
prove lasting, yet it has by no means
repaired—

repaired—it never can fully repair the fatal breach.—The wounds of tenderness are incurable. It is the very nature of refined sentiments to be with difficulty raised, and almost impossible to be revived.—Mr. Reeveley's behaviour to his lady is full of complaisance and affection; yet one may easily perceive that the deep sighs which often escape him, are more owing to the obligation he lyes under to her, than to his broken fortunes: and though Lady Frances (who no doubt perceives it) takes every method to take off his sense of them, yet her kind and polite attentions, (notwithstanding all her endeavours) seem to be more the exertions of generosity, than the spontaneous fruits of love.

From the account I have given you (which at the same time satisfies your enquiries) you may better gather how I should wish you in general to regulate

30 *A Letter from a Father to a Son,*

regulate your future behaviour to Miss Melway, than from any tedious precepts.

—Hold quite a different conduct.—

“ Forfake not the mistress when you take the wife.” All the duties in marriage on the husband’s side are comprised in this maxim : to such I mean, whose engagement like your’s, owes its origin to passion, refined by the workings of a delicate heart and liberal mind, improved and confirmed by a long and intimate acquaintance and an equal return, and ever under the regulation of reason, virtue, and honor.—Be therefore after, as you were before, marriage ; polite and complaisant without flattery, tender and attentive without servility or weakness.—Consider yourself still as a lover, only under a more indissoluble engagement than before the ceremony.—Do not look upon marriage as the termination of your sentimental connection, but as
an

an important circumstance in it, that brings on new while it annuls no old obligations.

I know I should be esteemed by most persons who saw this, most ridiculously romantic: but I own I cannot conceive a greater solecism in reason and morals, as well as in sentiment, than an alteration of behaviour in an engagement occasioned by marriage.—It is ungrateful to use a person the worse for granting us what we desired.—It is absurd to entreat the person whom before marriage we address at least as our equal, to commence our slave; or to expect any refined enjoyment in a mental, and I should think, even a personal connection with one.

Though what I have said appears to me sufficient for the general delineation of what I esteem an amiable conjugal character; yet as there are some points of conduct almost universally overlooked even by tender husbands,
or

32 *A Letter from a Father to a Son,*

or that may not seem deducible, and perhaps, even at first contradictory to the general tenor I recommend, but which however I hold material to happiness in this close connexion, I shall prolong my letter by touching upon them.

The first thing I would recommend to you is, the greatest delicacy in your person.—I know you look upon cleanliness as a moral duty; but it is not enough to be cleanly, you should be so with delicacy. There are humiliating circumstances in our corporeal as well as mental frame, that should make us earnest to palliate both, as far as we are able to do without using deceit. Not to do this argues, I think, indolence or pride. To be sensible of all our imperfections, and industrious to soften and amend them, is surely the truest and best sort of humility, as it tends to improve, not to debase us.—Next to the power of doing good, it is the
5 greatest

greatest advantage of fortune, to be able every way to refine our nature: and there is a graceful superstition in true love, which, by giving it a sort of sacred air, renders it more worthy of an intelligent being, and should be carefully fostered by those who wish to prolong the delights of a warm and tender passion. I would therefore, advise you never to do any thing to your dress in the presence of your wife.—I knew a gentleman, a very deep mathematician, who carried this so far as once to shave himself in his chaise, because there was no other room at liberty in the inn where he was, besides that of his lady's. And I own I was much pleased with the answer of rather an elderly man, and in the lower walk of life, with whom I once travelled in a public vehicle; who, upon excusing himself for rising rather abruptly from dinner to dress at the last stage

D

he

34 *A Letter from a Father to a Son,*

was going, and being asked by one of the company if he could not defer it as he was so near home, answered,

“Do you think I would return to my wife dirty, and with a beard?”

—Your mother and I never went into one another’s dressing-room during all the time of our union.

The next point in regard to the care of your person, is dress.—The world would chiefly have you fashionable and costly; the over-grave and thoughtful will be apt to think every thing beyond neatness at least, below your notice: I own I should wish you to be also elegant. Let the chief end of your dress, after health and convenience, be the setting off your person. Make the most of a handsome form as well as of every other advantage with which you are endowed: it is a duty you owe to your partner; it is a proper acknowledgment to the bounteous source of all our blessings. The gentleman

Man before-mentioned, who expected of learning to improve, not to set him above humanity, used successively to darken and lighten his room both with artificial and natural light, in order to find the colour that most became him.—I would not have you make a display of your wealth in your dress; it is not the place for such a display, and I doubt not but you will find better uses for any surplus from needful expences: to be the zealous votary also of every new fashion, would be rendering yourself the slave of a most whimsical, unreasonable, and fatiguing tyrant. Taste, and a conformity of your habit to your person, may be attained without a great expence of time or money; and though singular, and therefore at first most likely to be ridiculed, will soon however attract the approbation of all who are not entirely devoted to fashionable folly

Another personal precaution I think

36 *A Letter from a Father to a Son,*

worth your most careful attention, is the avoiding at table any thing strong, or which you know to be offensive to the now Miss Melway.—Perhaps there is hardly any thing so liable as this to alienate love, as it not only hurts the senses, but as it must be very cutting to our affections, and humiliating to our pride, to see so trifling a satisfaction as that of the palate so evidently preferred to us.—It is by no means sufficient to abstain from those things which you may hear Miss Melway mention to be disagreeable to her; but you yourself ought to find out (which is not difficult) what is so. For a false shame may perhaps prevent her expressing a dislike to that, the use of which may however be insensibly undermining her passion for you.

I have the more insisted on these personal particulars (if I may so term them) because I have seen the fatal effects

fects of the neglect of them between persons otherwise capable of a tender and lasting passion, but who from mistaken notions did not observe those very essential decorums for nourishing and preserving the tender emotions.— They have been represented, especially those that respect dress, and when regarding men, as below serious and elevated minds, and almost a profanation of the sacredness of the conjugal ties, which should rather mellow love into friendship and an union of souls, than stir up the flames of passion. But those who hold this language do not sufficiently consider that we are an union of body and soul; that our very nature consists in that union; that the feelings of the former are therefore to be attended to, as well as the sentiments of the latter; that it is not only the most pleasing, but the most rational method, as it is the most consonant to our state to refine, not to annihilate our

passions ; and that he who is not above being loved, ought not to be above the means of continuing to be so.—

The consequence of such opinions, if they are partial, is quick dislike to the person who entertains them ; and even if mutual, they create a sort of affection, which as it satisfies the imagination, but not the heart, (a most dangerous circumstance) leaves it unguarded against any other passion.—Be therefore careful, my dear Charles, by those little personal attentions (which cost no great trouble) to preserve the passion of love in all its warmest elegance.—I do not wish a couple should continue swain and shepherdes, though age shook their nerves ; but it would be my earnest desire, that as long as the idea of a mistress can be excited in you, your wife should excite it ; and as long as she can feel the tender emotions, you should be the happy man who inspires them.

I therefore would strongly recommend to you (though ever so soothing) never to suffer your wife to approach you in any illness as a nurse, but only as a friend.—Let her never enter your apartment but when it is prepared, when every thing about you bears as little as possible the unpleasant marks of sickness and infirmity.—She will most likely struggle hard against this resolution, but you must in your first indisposition, establish it as a settled and immutable point.

There is little danger, if you are careful of preserving those little decourums yourself, of your wife's neglecting them. The notions of delicacy, with which custom and education, perhaps nature, have impressed the mind of a young lady, will hardly suffer her to break through the forms of which she sees her husband a scrupulous observer; or at least will render her very easily to be checked by any little

stroke of raillery, should reflexion never have shown her the importance of those seeming trifles.

It is a trite observation, that nothing so often proves fatal to unions as diversities of temper. Yet I doubt not but that, with mutual care not to suffer self-love to make an unfair estimate of the propriety of each other's inclinations, and the mutual sacrifices made to them, they would, like light and shade in a landscape, rather improve the harmony of married life.—

On this therefore chiefly depends the felicity or infelicity (as far as lies in you) of your approaching connexion with Miss Melway: To be impartial to the reasonableness of your own *penchants*, and to make a candid allowance of every palliating circumstance to what may seem faulty in any of hers. And though the equity and propriety of such a conduct be obvious; yet how hard, my Charles, is it
to

to observe!—Love will doubtless very greatly lessen this difficulty; yet certain precautions in some particular points may not be unnecessary; and there are even some cases where love itself may increase the difficulty of a dispassionate judgment. An instance of this kind will most likely soon offer in your intended journey to London.—Always rather of a serious and contemplative turn, you never had but a slender relish, and even lost that slender relish soon, for the amusements of the town.—Let me caution you against expecting the same disposition in the now Miss Melway. You know, that the narrow limits of Lord Melway's fortune, which he scorned to stretch by any direct or indirect bribe that might fetter the freedom of his senatorial opinions, made him decline coming to town with his family. The novelty of the scene, her sprightliness,—vanity no doubt, supported by the gratifying circumstances

42 *A Letter from a Father to a Son,*

stances of wealth, rank, beauty, and wit, may very likely (notwithstanding the sincerest attachment to you) carry her at first into many extremes of gaiety and dissipation.—Beware of checking her career; not only by any open admonition, but even by any indirect hints, by your looks, your manner.—You are not going to unite with a person whose manners and principles you are a stranger to; and therefore on that account, and from my own knowledge of the young lady, I dare venture to pronounce her delirium will be short; but should it even threaten a long duration, believe me, it is not by the exertions of a fancied authority, totally incompatible with the present polish of society, nor by irksome disquisitions on the preference due to a husband, or passionate complaints on the instability of her affections that you will win her from the enchantments of the world. The first of these means would
only

only procure you her hatred; the two others most probably a disgust, the more inveterate because she could not justify it, nor free herself from a secret consciousness of acting a faulty part which she would be however unwilling to reform. And even supposing, that by your expostulations or arguments you could work her up to what you made her esteem her duty; that you could prevail on her reason to give herself more to you and less to diversions; yet unless you could also prevail upon her heart,—unless you could render your company more entertaining to her than those diversions, you would hardly enjoy any thing more in that forced society than her bodily presence; whilst her thoughts would be either perpetually roving on routs and public places, or she would at length become pensive and low-spirited.—If (as you have every reason to think will be the case) she addicts herself to the gaieties of a London

44 *A Letter from a Father to a Son,*

don life, merely from that curiosity and love of admiration so natural to her age and situation, and the usual concomitant not only of an open and gay, but even of a great and noble disposition, and not from any unsteadiness of temper or triflingness of character; they will most likely begin to pall upon her even before the first season be finished, and she will henceforward follow them with the moderation they deserve. All your care must be to keep fast hold of her heart; that whilst the tide of vanity and example bear her into all the fashionable follies of the great world, the influence of love may be still drawing her back from the eddy of dissipation. To this end, when “She would “to thy embraces run,” be sure to

Receive her with extended arms :
Seem more delighted with her charms :
Wait on her to the ball and play ;
Be in good-humour ; make her gay.

Be

Be to her virtues ever kind:
Be to her faults a little blind:
Let all her ways be unconfin'd. *

I would by no means advise what a most judicious and elegant female writer recommends in a late work, to a young lady, just entered into the same state; if possible, to unite your studies.—Beside reading together, I think I have heard Miss Melway express a desire of understanding Greek, on hearing you extol the beauties of that language, and of the authors who have written in it. I fancy she will ask you to teach it her: if she does, provided you like it (for the least disinclination in either party would destroy the very end of mingling their pursuits, mutually to cement their affections) ask her in return to teach you music and Italian; in both of which I understand she is a great proficient,

* Prior.

and

46 *A Letter from a Father to a Son,*

and to which your eagerness after the deeper departments of learning has hitherto prevented your applying yourself. This mutual intercourse of instruction will, I fancy, greatly increase the advantages of such communications, take off any little awkwardness of superiority which might otherwise arise, and reduce all between you to the desirable level. And should you both make progress enough in your respective undertakings, for each to gain a relish for the object of them, not only on account of the teacher, but likewise of the thing taught, it may be an additional means of restraining her from too great a devotement to town amusements.

But the chief opportunity of riveting yourself to her heart, will be when she makes the tender lover a joyful father.—Children may be made the strongest cement of conjugal affection : but a great deal depends on the conduct

or

of the father and the husband during this interesting period. This is the time, by evincing all the tenderness of your attachment to her, to make her your's for ever; to make her esteem your society above all the blandishments of vanity or incense of flattery, if she sees in you the lover, the father of her children, the tender comforter of her pains, and the attentive companion of the retirement which prudence suggests at the approach of, and after that event, and which your example will mightily encourage.—

Indeed those men who strongly inculcate to their wives the propriety of a quiet domestic sequestration, from those gaieties peculiarly agreeable at that season when the mind droops under approaching sickness; and at the same time decline bearing what part they can of the common burthen, by filling up the void of solitude with all their powers of entertainment, and al-

48 *A Letter from a Father to a Son,*

laying the little peevishness of indisposition, by complaisance and good humour ; must be utter strangers to the moral obligations of the solemn engagements into which they have voluntarily entered, callous to every finer feeling, and stupidly insensible to the interesting example of the most refined species of inferior creation. Let a man but observe with attention a couple of birds in his garden, and he will reap, from the pleasing scenes of tenderness he will there be witness to, a pleasing, simple, beautiful, and elegant lesson of the duties of the nuptial bond ; and if fired with any sentiment deserving the name of love, if capable of any of the tender emotions, he will conceive the delight attending the discharge of them.—But I have insensibly expatiated on this subject longer than was proper with one who wants no spur to generous actions ; and I need not therefore add, that not only diversions,
of

of which you are not fond, but not even your private, your darling studies, nothing in short but important and undelayable business should make you dispense with this duty.

I am almost balancing whether to give you my thoughts on the conduct I should think proper for you to hold with regard to your other mutual heart-connexions, not only as I know the common opinion is against me, but lest I should appear to have interested views in my advice.—Most of those persons who do not look on marriage as a mere matter of business, or a youthful frolic, seem to think that the straitness of the nuptial tie, ought in a manner to supersede every other natural or acquired attachment; that this dearest of connexions ought almost to absorb every tender feeling of the heart; that this chief affection, like Aaron's rod, should swallow up the rest, or at best, that they should be in such subordi-

E

nation

nation to it, that their greatest interest should be sacrificed without reserve, if in the least they interfere with that highest amity.—This I find peculiarly admired in, and recommended to the fair-sex.—To be full of tenderness and duty to their parents ; to be dictated, or at least directed, in their choice of a husband by their fathers ; and then at once to transfer almost the whole of this dutiful tenderness to him with tenfold increase ; to form no new attachments without his sanction ; and to hold the primary ones so loose as to be able to dismiss them whenever they give him any umbrage, is esteemed the perfection of female conduct.—But those who thus want to mark out the road for the feelings of the heart, have either been influenced by selfish motives, or having never felt in any high degree those kindly predilections that wait not for our call, have either been borne

borne away by common opinion, or have formed a system of what they imagined would be most convenient, without sufficiently searching into the source of friendship; which resembles refined love in so many particulars, and bears so great an affinity to it, that we find the same word in many languages expresses both passions. For friendship is a passion; that is, though conformable to, it has something in it of feeling above the solution of reason; and what Montaigne says about the cause of his loving a friend, (after bestowing nevertheless the greatest encomiums on the qualities both of his heart and mind) though I think still more applicable to a mistress, is however far from being improper in the case of a friend, “ Si on une presse de
“ dire pourquoi je l’aimois; je sens
“ que cela ne se peut exprimer, qu’en
“ respondant: parceque c’etoit lui,
“ parceque c’etoit moi.”

52 *A Letter from a Father to a Son,*

The husband therefore who by any direct or indirect means, endeavours to check or regulate the friendships of his wife, appeals in a manner from that inexplicable partiality on which his own preference is founded ; and is therefore almost as unreasonable as the friend would be, who should attempt to interfere with her affections to him.—Beware therefore, whatever be your own feelings ; whether you have ever experienced the generous glow of enkindling affection ; or, that from whatever cause, you have been a stranger to that noble sympathy, before you knew Miss Melway ; beware, I say, from any little jealousy, or indeed almost any other motive, of tugging at the foundation of your own felicity, by any way trying to weaken her kindly affections to her relations and her friends, either prior to, or acquired since your union.—But what if her bosom friend should fall into any fault,
for

for which the world would not only excuse, but even commend her in deserting, nay, most likely stigmatize you both, if she did not abandon that friend; what must be your conduct in such a case? To inforce or even advise the desertion?—No, generosity forbid! Ask your own heart, had your friend committed any flagitious act (which did not however plainly indicate a cankered heart) should you not esteem yourself a summer friend, if you left him in this emergency, instead of allaying the stings of deserved reproach, and covering, and recovering him from, his fault?—But the parallel is notequal, you may say. In standing by my fallen friend I venture not her character; but her zeal exposes mine to ridicule and sarcasm. The answer is plain: Is this ridicule, are those sarcasms deserved? If not, have you so little value for the mental excellencies of your wife, and so pusil-

54 *A Letter from a Father to a Son,*

lanimous a regard for yourself, that you had rather she should feel the thorns of reflexion for failing in the sacred duties of friendship, than to bear yourself the unmerited scorn of the giddy croud, not one of whom you probably esteem? And also consider, that if from an immoderate self-love, you should attempt to make her give up her friend, and you did not succeed, she must entertain but an unfavourable opinion of the stability of your own affections; and if she were weak enough to yield to your most pressing solicitations, to your most positive request; what affiance could you yourself have in that heart whose love you found by experience could be shaken?—I have the rather chosen this instance, because it is a most trying one, and not very unlikely to happen.—A young woman, hurried by her parents into a wealthy marriage, drawn by vanity and dissipation (the only compensations

penfations frequently for fuch a match) into innumerable temptations, unguarded by conjugal love, may, with many amiable, many eftimable qualities, well worthy to attract, and capable of returning a tender amity, fall into the moft fatal error; though ſhe may not be endued with fufficient effrontery to hide her fault if ſuſpected, or bear it out, if diſcovered; and hath too much beauty to have it forgiven her by envy: now, the well-timed counfels of a tender and conſtant friend at that period, may prevent her plunging into the depths of guilt, to which a total deſertion might probably at length lead her.

Next to not interfering with the connexions of her heart, it will be but juſt and reaſonable, and alſo politic in you not to ſtrive in the leaſt to obtrude your friends and relations, as friends and relations on her; nor to expect her to embrace them with cor-

dial affection; to spend a great deal of her time with them, or in any ways to distinguish them with partial consideration. Good-breeding and polite attentions are what you certainly have a right to obtain; but I think, nothing farther.—Though they are your friends, and your relations; they are but her acquaintance. Not but that a mutual adoption of each other's feelings towards the other objects of your affections would be an exceedingly happy event, and greatly conducive even to the increase or maintenance of your own; nor (at least in some considerable degree) by any means improbable; for we must certainly be well-inclined to those who love the object of our own predilection. But then, these kinder sentiments must be left to spring spontaneous, uninforced by words or manner, and only attended with secret wishes; for any other endeavour would only impede, if not destroy

destroy the growth of the tender seed of friendly inclination. Kindness to her own particulars, would be the most probable means of provoking affection toward yours. But be not offended with her, though you grew attached to any of her intimates, if she made no return to your's. Remember the above quoted passage of Montaigne.—I need hardly say, that in this, as well as the foregoing point, you may enjoy the same liberty which I have advised you to allow her.

But of all circumstances which are apt to disturb the union of wedded life, the most fatal to its very being, next to inconstancy, is jealousy, that monstrous offspring of pride and love.—I have already hinted at that sort of exception which you might conceive from your lady's addicting herself rather too much to diversions; and still assiduously cultivating old, or forming new friendships,

58 *A Letter from a Father to a Son,*

friendships ; which is a sort of lesser jealousy, and the more to be guarded against because it is the symptom of a disposition ready to receive any impressions of the more malignant kind of suspicion.—What some ancient philosopher said, that an evil thought not expressed was half smothered, holds with the greatest force in this fatal passion. Perhaps the fears of jealousy may not be in our power ; but to give those fears expression, certainly is ; and the more to be avoided, as it can rarely lead us to any discovery of their being well grounded or not ; but only tends to increase and nourish those disturbers of our peace. For no behaviour, no answer of the person doubted, can satisfy the unfortunate person infected with this distemper. A careless or indignant reception of his anxious doubts, will not only enrage, but be alike attributed to design ; and even the gentle expressions
of

of tender concern, will be most probably (at least inwardly) branded with the opinion of well-counterfeited hypocrisy. It is chiefly therefore on this account, on the difficulty, I had almost said, impossibility of ascertaining the reasonableness or unreasonableness of our apprehensions (if the person failing be attentive to veil his or her inconstancy) that I should give Mrs. Chapone's advice to every wedded person, "To let nothing but irresistible proof, unsought for, and obtruded on their senses, ever shake their confidence and esteem in each other." But if these desolating proofs to a heart truly touched should be made manifest to either party, nothing (after the first agonies of violated affection) but

—— "Slight regard, contempt,
"And any thing that may not misbecome
"The mighty sufferer,"

60 *A Letter from a Father to a Son,*

is suitable to the condition of the injured person, if he has not been wanting to himself in trying to secure those affections he had previously gained. For those persons who have not nurtured the tender sentiment of love with sufficient care, and who have been faulty in their behaviour, may have some hopes, by reforming the defects of their conduct, and bearing with gentleness what they have in some measure deserved, of recovering the hearts of their inconstants. But the man or woman who have fulfilled the duties of each tender scene, are fallen from their high state of predilection, never to rise again. They have no remaining card to throw, and are therefore sure of playing a losing game. Perseverance in a cause so desperate becomes folly, and rather proceeds from debility of mind, than gentleness of soul. Nothing therefore but strong prudential reasons ought to keep a
person

person in bonds, which in such a case are entirely dissolved; and that to a dignified mind, properly conscious of the worth of its intensest affections, must become unsupportable. These prudential reasons can seldom exist with a man, and as far as relates to fortune, cannot affect Miss Melway: for I have, I hope, improved to your satisfaction, the modest hint you gave “of favouring Miss Melway as much in the settlements as was consistent with my own particular views,” by strictly following the commonly mock donation in the liturgy; “With my worldly goods I thee endow;” in putting you both exactly on the same footing, both in present and permanent pecuniary interest.

This theme must needs be very ungrateful to a young lover, and I assure you, my dear Charles, it is not in fear of Miss Melway that I have expatiated on this subject; for next to
you

62 *A Letter from a Father to a Son,*

you (which is saying a great deal for one who knows the steadiness of your principles and the virtues of your heart) there is no person on whose fidelity I should build a more absolute trust : but my intention is, to do the little I can towards arming you with constancy to bear the worst reverse of human fragility with calm dignity, the surest way of procuring you at least peace of mind in such a situation, and as much happiness as is consistent with the disappointment of one's primary pursuit, and of guarding you at the same time against a passion, the most likely means of bringing on the event which it's torturing fears suggest.

But before I entirely dismiss this disagreeable subject, let me add a few words on the conduct proper for you to hold should your lady ever feel the stings of an ungrounded suspicion.— If you perceive she wants to conceal her jealousy, try all you can to dispel it,

it, by (if possible) increased tenderness and affection : but if it get so far the better of her reason as to break out into open surmises, after expressing the concern you must undoubtedly feel, try dispassionately and patiently to argue the point with her ; to shew her with mildness the groundlessness of her suspicions, and the fatal consequences that may arise from them ; the disturbance of your mutual peace, and the danger of the continuance of her jealousy hurting your affections, but alter nothing in your conduct for the better or for the worse. If her distemper run so high that this be ineffectual, declare to her with gentleness and resolution, that her complaints of you being groundless, and out of your power to redress, you must intreat her not to repeat them, or you will be obliged when she does, to relinquish immediately the delight of her company, and withdraw to your

64 *A Letter from a Father to a Son,*

own apartment. Keep, if you can, steadily to this resolution, making, if possible, no other alteration whatsoever in your behaviour either towards herself, or the person of whom she may have conceived jealousy.

This conduct (which I confidently trust you will never have the mournful occasion to put in practice, both your souls being in too harmonious an union easily to admit the harsh jar of groundless jealousy) may seem to you hard-hearted; but is, I believe, the best calculated to preserve your peace and love the least injured that is possible; and though it may rouse the passions of the jealous person at first to the highest pitch, yet at last it will restore the discordant mind to its proper tone. For the distempers of the mind, which are partly in our own power (as the expression of jealousy certainly is) are only nourished by indulgence and complaisance, and ought rather to be checked

checked by friends with tender resolution, and over-ruled with gentle though inflexible steadiness.

Though this letter has insensibly lengthened to a degree I could not have imagined when I first sat down to write, you must doubtless perceive that several things have been left unsaid, and even a great many points wholly untouched. Yet from what I have expressed you may easily deduce what would be my sentiments on other occasions. I have given you the general tenor of the conduct I should think adviseable for a man to hold who wished to preserve the possession of a heart he had acquired. I have shown the fatal effects of a different conduct. I have pointed out some instances where that very desire would be apt without caution to counteract itself, and where therefore the cool counsels of uninterested reason, not unsupported by sweet experience, could

F

66 *A Letter from a Father to a Son,*

could not be entirely needless.—After all, this is only the advice of a friend, not the injunctions of a parent. In any thing I have said, I never meant to doubt the tendernefs, delicacy or sincerity of either of your affections ; but only to direct their effect.

I need hardly tell you that, in such a conduct as I have here advised, you will stand almost single in the circle of your acquaintance ; that you will be equally exposed to the laugh of the gay, and the censures of the few over-grave ; that the unfeeling votaries of wealth or fame, whether of the lighter, or more rigid kind, will think your cares directed to a silent, domestic end, ridiculous, and would esteem them much better employed in planning an entertainment, in carrying on an unmeaning criminal commerce with celebrated Beauties, in diving into all the mysteries of the gaming-table, or in worry-
9- ing

ing a minister with perpetual cavils, and descrying with nicety the uttermost line where seditious, and only illiberal abuse of the sovereign ends, and legal criminality commences. —I leave to Miss Melway the task of convincing their arguments of folly, and to your own virtues and wisdom of evincing, that the cherishing of those tender sentiments, which not only innocently delight the heart, but refine the moral character, take nothing from, but much rather improve the citizen, by bettering the man. In short, I have considered you in all this letter, neither on the one hand, as the cold and unfeeling philosopher, who, by attempting to rise above, sinks below his nature; nor, on the other, as intending by your union with Miss Melway, only to gratify the senses with a necessarily-transient rapture; but as desiring after being accompanied in your youth with the loves, the

68 *A Letter from a Father to a Son.*

graces, and the social virtues, to be attended to the verge of a well-spent life by the smiles of cheerfulness, the sweets of friendship, and the pleasing recollection of elegant, improving, and virtuous delights.

This (if no sinister stroke of fortune cut off the fair prospect) as it is the well-grounded and firm hope, so it is the most ardent wish of

Your tenderly affectionate Father,

And most faithful Friend,

London, Sept. 5,

1777.

AUGUSTUS LOVEMORE.



43 1 2 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31 32 33 34 35 36 37 38 39 40 41 42 43 44 45 46 47 48 49 50 51 52 53 54 55 56 57 58 59 60 61 62 63 64 65 66 67 68 69 70 71 72 73 74 75 76 77 78 79 80 81 82 83 84 85 86 87 88 89 90 91 92 93 94 95 96 97 98 99 100